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FACT SHEET

UNICEF Nutrition Program in Afghanistan

OVERVIEW

Malnutrition is a major public health problem in Afghanistan and a significant contributing factor of maternal and child mortality. The U.S. Government, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) aim to reduce malnutrition in children between the ages of six and 59 months and decrease the prevalence of malnutrition in pregnant and breastfeeding women. The program improves infant and young child feeding practices; increases the knowledge and skills of health providers and community health workers in the prevention, detection, and management of malnutrition at the household level; and creates a functioning system for community-based management of malnutrition. Additionally, the program provides supplies and equipment to therapeutic feeding centers including high energy biscuits, micronutrients, and emergency nutrition kits; training support for health workers and service providers; and educational materials on breastfeeding and other supportive nutrition practices.

Project activities are coordinated by the MoPH, UNICEF, the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, USAID and various NGOs, and are carried out by NGOs implementing the Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS). The BPHS delineates the services that should be provided by each type of healthcare facility in Afghanistan, and specifies the staff, equipment, diagnostic services, and medications required to provide those services. All activities are coordinated with other food and nutrition programs operating in Afghanistan.

ACTIVITIES

- Implementing community-based management of severe acute malnutrition in 13 provinces affected by drought and rising food prices.
- Conducting a nutrition survey in 13 targeted provinces to determine the extent of malnutrition and generate benchmark indicators for long term programming.
- Conducting social mobilization and communication on infant and young child feeding practices to improve overall child nutrition.
- Training health workers, community health workers, and community groups for strengthened and accelerated delivery of nutrition interventions.
- Providing technical support for the strengthened management and implementation of the project.
- Procuring nutrition supplies for prevention and treatment of malnutrition.
- Conducting regular field monitoring and supportive supervision of nutrition activities at provincial, district, and community levels.

EXPECTED RESULTS

- Reduce morbidity and mortality from malnutrition in children and reduced prevalence of malnutrition in pregnant and lactating women.
- Improve infant and young child feeding practices, such as proper breastfeeding and weaning.
- Improve knowledge and skills of health workers and community health volunteers in the prevention, detection, and management of malnutrition.
- Increase community awareness of prevention and management of malnutrition at the household level.
- Establish a functioning system for community-based management of malnutrition.